

Inclusive Practices

RESOURCE GUIDE

Has your program effectively communicated with students about racial violence?

June 2020



About this guide

It can be overwhelming to know where to start or what to do when racial violence comes to the fore, and we know that people have different levels of experience and background knowledge. To effectively and empathetically serve your students, we offer some guidance based on current research and evidence

Across the country, Black Americans are experiencing vicarious or direct trauma as a result of systemic racism and our long history of police violence. Black Americans are nearly three times more likely than white Americans to be killed by police and five times more likely than white Americans to be killed unarmed, according to the Mapping Police Violence database.

Racism can lead to higher levels of psychological distress, including suicidal thoughts, anxiety, and depression. Discrimination is the single strongest predictor of graduate student anxiety and depression. While a secure mentor-mentee relationship, combined with support from friends and family, may be a good place to discuss what students may be experiencing, mentors should not take the place of a mental health professional. If needed, direct your students to campus/ community resources.

Educate yourself

It is inappropriate to call on colleagues/students of color for guidance during these times.

Learn about allyship, and how to critique your own thinking and behavior.

- ❖ [A primer was recently published by CNN.](#)
- ❖ [Ally is not a noun.](#)
- ❖ [There is a difference between being a nice person and an ally in higher education.](#)

Here are several TED talks that introduce important ideas:

- ❖ [How racism makes us sick.](#)
- ❖ [Let's get to the root of racial injustice](#)
- ❖ [How we can start to heal the pain of racial division.](#)
- ❖ [What it takes to be racially literate.](#)
- ❖ [How to resolve racially stressful situations.](#)
- ❖ [How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them.](#)
- ❖ [Why ordinary people need to understand power.](#)
- ❖ [How Studying Privilege Systems Can Strengthen Compassion](#)
- ❖ [The urgency of intersectionality.](#)

Read the research:

- ❖ ["Am I going crazy?!": A critical race analysis of doctoral education](#)
- ❖ [Responding to racism and racial trauma in doctoral study](#)
- ❖ [The diversity-innovation paradox in science](#)
- ❖ [Graduate students' agency & resistance after oppressive experiences](#)
- ❖ [Bait and switch: Representation, climate, & tensions of diversity work in graduate education](#)
- ❖ [My sister's keeper: Mentoring experiences of African American women](#)

Communicating with your students

Martin Luther King wrote, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Check-in

A one-on-one check-in is different than the high level statements that come from presidents and CEOs.

Everyone is struggling with this, so instead of asking "how are you?" it is better just to express support and care.

Listen & Support

Refrain from vocalizing your own feelings/opinions or occupying space to learn how you can improve.

Enable conversations and platforms to let student voices be heard. Not only are Black people dealing with the trauma of systemic racism but also the constant dismissal and invalidation of their lived experiences.

Things you can say (if and only if it is coming from a place of authenticity):

- *Black lives matter*
- *Racism will not be tolerated in your department*
- *Wellbeing is more important than work.*

Expectations

Remind research supervisors and instructors that they may want to offer some latitude in scholarship/academic expectations during crises.

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Concluding remarks

Remember that in times like this, students need to see not only that you care about them as individuals, but that your leadership demonstrates commitment to eliminating barriers and improving the climate, resources, and success of Black students.



Inclusive Graduate Education Network



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